

MADD backs scientists' goals for reducing drunken driving but doesn't endorse lowering 0.08 blood-alcohol limit

Source: <https://www.dallasnews.com/>
Dana Branham, Breaking news reporter
January 19th

Mothers Against Drunk Driving largely supports recommendations from a group of scientists urging states to adopt laws that they say would reduce drunken driving, but MADD maintains its support for the current 0.08 drunken-driving threshold.

The scientists, commissioned by the U.S. government, recommended that states lower the blood alcohol concentration threshold from 0.08 to 0.05. Doing so would help eliminate the "entirely preventable" 10,000 alcohol-impaired driving deaths in the U.S. each year, according to the report.

MADD said many of its initiatives align with the scientists' recommendation, including sobriety checkpoints, ignition locks for DWI offenders, and improving technology for detecting drunken drivers.

But the Irving-based organization still supports a 0.08 drunken driving threshold.

"I would certainly say that MADD applauds the report's recommendation, because they really affirmed the key components of our campaign to eliminate drunk driving," said Ron Sylvan, a regional executive director for the Irving-based organization.

The amount of alcohol required to reach or pass the 0.05 threshold would depend on the person's size and how recently he or she has eaten.

Most women would need to draw the line at two drinks, and men at two or three if states follow the recommendation. A 120-pound woman could pass the threshold after one drink, and a 150-pound man could exceed the limit after two beers, according to the American Beverage Institute.

Sylvan said the best way to avoid worrying about whether you've crossed the legal threshold is to simply not drink and drive.

"If you don't drink and drive, then the BAC level really becomes a moot issue," he said.

In 2016, 987 people were killed in Texas motor vehicle crashes in which a driver was under the influence of alcohol, according to the most recent statistics from the Texas Department of Transportation.

Utah has passed a law to lower its BAC threshold to the suggested 0.05, but the new limit won't go into effect until the end of the year.

"It'll be interesting after one year of that law being in effect if it made a difference in arrests, if it made a difference in drunk driving fatalities," Sylvan said.

In its report, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine also recommended sharp increases of alcohol taxes and making alcohol less conveniently available for purchase in stores, bars and restaurants. Research suggests a doubling of alcohol taxes could lead to an 11 percent reduction in traffic crash deaths, the report said.

Sylvan said those recommendations touch on matters that MADD tries not to meddle in.